

<http://www.policeone.com/career/articles/7411573-Ill-cop-fired-after-fatally-shooting-dog/>**07/29/2014****Ill. cop fired after fatally shooting dog**

Chief said the officer reported that while attempting to coax the dog back into the house, the dog growled and approached him in a threatening manner

By Stephanie K. Baer and Carlos Sadovi  
Chicago Tribune

HOMETOWN, Ill. — A police officer in southwest suburban Hometown has been fired days after fatally shooting a dog in front of a 6-year-old girl, officials said.

The dog's owners said their 1-year-old German Shepherd mix, named Apollo, had run out the front door of their house on the 8700 block of Beck Place around 2:20 p.m. Friday and had returned to the front lawn when police arrived.

"I walked over and I tried to call him inside. The police officer had his gun out already," Nicole Echlin, one of the dog's owners told the Tribune over the weekend. Her 6-year-old daughter walked with her.

"He started showing his teeth — that's when the officer shot him," said Echlin, 27. "I didn't know that was going to happen."

Echlin said she grabbed the girl and rushed inside the home. "That's going to be in her head probably forever," Echlin said.

In a statement on the Hometown Police Department's Facebook page, Chief Charles Forsyth said the officer reported that while attempting to coax the dog back into the house, the dog turned and growled and approached him in a threatening manner.

The officer then drew his service weapon and fired one shot, striking the dog.

"Although the officer may have been justified under the Illinois Use of Force statute governing deadly force, I have made the decision to terminate that officer's employment with the Hometown Police Department," Forsyth said.

"In addition, all reports and witness statements will be forwarded to the Illinois State Police Public Integrity Unit to be reviewed."

The dog was taken to the Animal Welfare League in Chicago Ridge, where he died Saturday morning, said Echlin's sister Kristy Scialabba, who was at work during the incident.

"I'm heartbroken. That was my best friend. It was also my niece's best friend (and she is) traumatized," said Scialabba, 23. "It should have never happened and I just want justice."

Scialabba said police knew the dog had gotten out a few times prior to Friday, but there was no record of him harming anyone. On Friday, the dog stood his ground when the officer pointed the gun at him, Echlin said.

Scialabba has created a Facebook page "Justice for Apollo" and is planning a rally outside the police department next Sunday.

"We're going to try to get our questions answered as to why this happened," she said.

Copyright 2014 the Chicago Tribune

McClatchy-Tribune News Service